

Baker Lake sockeye

1-31-14 Mill Creek Public Input / Meeting Notes

- Bank anglers would like more river opportunity. Lake fishery is not accessible for anglers without boats.
- Bite ability of fish is key factor. If we catch sockeye before we collect broodstock is collected, we will breed biting out of them.
- Can river fishery be managed to protect individual anglers, restrict access to guides? Prevent it from becoming a 'sport commercial' fishery.
- If we don't strike correct balance between river and lake, there will be no lake fishery. Sockeye in lake is a numbers game. If we don't move enough fish into the lake, we won't catch our share. What is acceptable percentage between river and lake?
- Fish are headed for Concrete, the river is in concrete. The city is not seeing any benefit because traffic turns to go to Baker Lake. River fishery brings business to the town, and that should be considered.
- River fishery has been confined to certain location(s) in the past. Is it possible to get closer to Concrete, especially later in the season?
- Would like to see chart overlaying run-timing with treaty and non-treaty harvests. If we had equal opportunity to early-season run, then shut it down while tribe fishes, then re-adjust, it would give both of us equal opportunity. We are only getting late fish, which are poorer quality and poorer biters.
- #1 criticism heard by license dealers is that rules are difficult to understand. We need a set open day to keep it simple. Easy to extend or close season if needed. We have opening days for other species/areas, need it for Baker.
- There is nothing wrong with having the opening day early enough that you could close if needed, then reopen later if we still have harvestable fish. Have an early allotment, let people fish while there are fewer fish in the lake, close and re-open later if needed.
- We should open a week later. Five days later.
- We should open earlier – I troll camera on downrigger to see how many fish are there. It starts increasing rapidly around the 10th. By the 25th-28th, it starts to taper off. 10th to 28th or 30th is really good, easy limits early in the morning.

- It doesn't matter when you open. If it opens July 1 and there are no fish, people will fish it and leave.
- If you open early, it will create havoc; people will go fishing then be upset that they aren't catching fish.
- Lots of fisheries that are open, people wait on the word that fish are there before going. If the blogs say that the fish are there on the 12th, I just want to know that it is open.
- Opportunity more important than the harvest. If we don't have the opportunity, we will never get to the harvest goal.
- Bigger sockeye are being caught in August than in July – why?
- Argument for non-fishermen having access to campgrounds around July 4th is legitimate – could use smaller bag limits to limit effort and displacement of non-fishermen.
- Bakke/Urabeck 30/20 Proposal for 2015
 - o Reflects a lot of consideration, conversations with WDFW staff, more comprehensive than what the state has showed us so far
 - o Recap of 2014 (see written proposal)
 - o Proposed 2015 plan
 - Hoping to reach a consensus today on plan with stakeholders and WDFW
 - We do not want to know what the tribes think at this point. We are more than willing to sit down with tribes if there is an issue
 - Adjust PSF for trend of lower smolt-to-adult survival
 - Compute shares after set asides
 - Apply buffer to pre-season forecast-based harvestable shares, limiting harvest to 70% of pre-season shares until ISU is completed
 - If PSF is >30,000 allow quota-driven river sport fishery beginning on June 16
 - Quota would be 70% of 20% of the non-treaty share (14%)
 - Adjust quota after ISU complete to 20% of non-treaty share
 - Baker Lake – open July 10, bag limit of 3. Transfer balance of non-treaty allocation into lake. Increase bag limit to 4-6 sockeye after more than 6,000 sockeye are released into the lake.
 - Complete ISU by July 18. Continue fisheries until share achieved.
- Buffer approach should be taken into NOF. If we don't reach agreement today, we will have another meeting to reach agreement on approach.
- The state needs to come back in 1-2 weeks with proposal they will take forward

- Would like to see if we will be true partners when state shares proposal. We want to see what you are going forward with on our behalf. Like the proposal, might want to see some things adjusted.
- Agree with this. Does the state have resources to manage river fisheries as required by this?
- Frank – there is a good probability we can get the money to do what needs to be done. We will pursue with the Commission. Come up with a number, and tell us how it compares to what you spent last year. If we can't get the money, it undercuts the approach.
- If we had an early season fishery, could we use a fish check on the website for people to report? Let us report our catch as responsible sport fisherman.
- *WDFW Response – You said you don't want to hear about the tribes, but it is a reality we have to consider as we go forward. We are not going to make these decisions in isolation, without consideration of other fisheries. We have to consider strategies with tribes, it would be foolish not to. We must consider reactions of tribes.*
- We are guessing what tribes will buy, we know that we have to talk to tribes. Don't want you to reject ideas out of hand.
- *WDFW Response – Elephant in the room is that if we push on that idea, we don't want to be proposing anything that we are not willing to suffer on some other fishery. We are fishing behind tribes in large part on this fishery. We would be foolish to think the tribes would not suggest same approach for other fisheries. A lot of our fisheries are in mixed-stock areas where we do not have the ability to update those runs, we have tried to manage in a season approach. If we did apply buffer, the small ER rates we are trying to save, we would start closing fisheries.*
- Buffer works well, but you have to face the reality that it would mean less opportunity in every marine fishery. Buffered blackmouth fishery would be over before it started buffer. Tribes will ask to buffer fisheries ahead of us.
- We have offered something up that is feasible, and we are not convinced that the tribe will reject it. We want assurance that we will not have a repeat of last year. That is unacceptable.
- *WDFW Response – I can't guarantee that 2014 will never repeat itself. Without perfect information going in, I can't guarantee that.*
- You have a proposal to do something different. We are not going to sit back – we will work with you and the tribes. You need to carry the message.
- *WDFW Response – I am just saying we don't want to go forward with proposal without considering other implications.*

- I heard at least 6 times this morning that we don't have all the information to manage as precisely as we would like. If you want long-term equity, just do away with ISU's and manage for PSF's until information is better. ISU's are great, but require a significant database to base decisions on.
- I like the buffer idea in this fishery, but we should evaluate the rest of our fisheries and make sure we don't shoot ourselves in the foot. 30% would lead to loss of opportunity in other areas. As a group, we should look at it, and not risk everything for this single fishery. Need to leave room for adjustment and evaluation so it does not become an across the board sword.
- Forecast is problem. Estimate is always high. Why?
- *WDFW Response – That is not true. Survival rates have varied between 1.3% and 27.6%. What do you pick on an individual year? We don't go to the high point, we use some sort of median, mean, regression, etc.*
- *WDFW Response – Explanation of co-manager forecasting process. You would prefer if we came in with lower estimate. Those forecasts have to be agreed to by co-managers as well. Hedging with conservative forecast has some merit, but it is comanager process.*
- *WDFW Response – if we used lowest 3-year average, we would not have a fishery this year. Tribes would not either.*
- Do we have a trend in survival? Which direction are we going?
- *WDFW Response – there is a trend, but we don't know until they show up what we have. They rates bounce around year-to-year. 2010 is going to happen again. We missed the forecast by 500%. We'll miss the forecast in the opposite direction to. We are going to miss.*
- We are looking for conservation first, get us equitable with tribes to maximize our share. Get us as close as possible.
- Why do they need to net in the river? We have unique situation. They enjoy netting the river like I do fishing?
- Did we catch more than the tribes in 2010? Yes.
- Come back with and tell us where you are on each point in two weeks.
- *We will share where we are in a couple of weeks.*
- *March Puget Sound meeting good time for discussion of where we are on Baker, will have better idea where we are on other stocks/issues.*

- It is about opportunity. If our desire is to have the same size pile of fish as the tribes at the end of the day. State could figure out how to do it, but it would not create the opportunities that we want to see. I think it is okay that our pile of fish is smaller. Frank owes the state an explanation for what happens if the tribes want a buffer on all of our fisheries.
- We are increasing this run, the fish return in bell-shaped curve. The fish come in early, and are caught early. Makes a good case for moving the opening date up. July 10th is not acceptable. We can increase number of days and bag-limit to increase our share. So we don't get lost in the buffer argument, we need to know what we agree on. Not everyone will get what they want. Let's have a days and limits focused discussion.
- Can group reach consensus on 4 points from the final slide?
- Start/End Dates
 - o Put reference to website for current counts in pamphlet so people can check for themselves.
 - o **River - June 16 – July 15 or quota (20%).** Quota based on funding available.
 - Downriver vs. upriver?
 - Monitoring costs. Potential conflict issues. Avoid closures within season.
 - o **Lake – Open July 1 or July 10. Give further consideration.**
 - **Close ~September 8**
 - Potential issue with USFS. Potential expectations of higher abundances of sockeye in lake than are likely.
- Bag limit
 - o What difference does it make whether limit starts at 3? In this fishery, you aren't saving those fish for someone else. It should be higher rather than lower.
 - o Peg bag limit to abundance?
 - o Interest in higher bag limit
 - o Limit number of changes from pamphlet.
 - o **Adopt bag limits 30,000 – 3, 40,000 – 4, 50,000 – 5, 60,000 – 6.**
- Lake vs. River
 - o Open river from Mt. Vernon to Gilligan for boats, Gilligan to Baker for bank access
 - o Catch downstream can affect opportunity in Concrete. Want that area open too.
 - o Important to provide bank opportunity.
 - o Sounds like fish ball up at the mouth of the Baker – don't want combat fishery in that spot.
 - o Preference to go with Bakke/Urabeck proposal, if creel census can be funded
 - o Strawman provided by Dept. protected lake fishery at low abundances, but increased river fishery at higher abundances
 - o **20% to River. More work on open areas/sites.**

- River: season vs. quota
 - **Pursue quota fishery if creel dollars available.**

We will compile all of this and have response by the Mill Creek NOF meeting in March.